

# **Saving Lives**

## **Brief Program Description**

In the United States in 2002, 17,419 persons died and 258,000 were injured in traffic crashes that involved alcohol. Fatalities were 33% lower than in 1982, in part because groups such as Mothers against Drunk Driving stimulated passage of more than 2000 new state laws. While research has linked many laws to fatal crash declines, sometimes post law declines are followed by a return to pre-law levels. Previous US community traffic safety interventions have focused solely on drunk driving enforcement and accompanying publicity.

## **Program Strategies**

The Saving Lives Program utilizes a comprehensive/multi-strategy approach, one that organizes multiple city departments and private citizens in an effort to reduce alcohol-impaired driving, related driving risks, traffic deaths, and the proportion of crashes resulting in injury. In March 1998, six communities in Massachusetts were funded by the Massachusetts Governor's Highway Safety Bureau and the Commonwealth Fund of New York to undertake this program.

The program communities developed most of the program initiatives. To reduce drunk driving and speeding, communities introduced media campaigns, business information programs, speeding and drunk-driving awareness days, speed watch telephone hotlines, sobriety check points, police training, high school peer-led education, Students against Drunk Driving chapters, college prevention programs, alcohol-free prom nights, beer keg registration, and increased liquor outlet surveillance. To increase pedestrian safety and seat belt use, program communities undertook media campaigns and police checkpoints, posted crosswalk signs warning motorists of fines for failure to yield to pedestrians, added crosswalk guards, and offered preschool education programs and training for hospital and prenatal clinic staff.

## **Population Focus**

The program is community based and targets city departments, private citizens, motorists, and pedestrians.

## **Suitable Settings**

This intervention is suitable for implementation in a community setting.

## **Required Resources**

Funding by the Highway Safety Bureau and the Commonwealth Fund of New York were required.

## **Implementation Timeline**

The program began in March 1998. Statistics from the five years preceding and following the program were utilized.

## **Outcomes**

- In program cities, fatal crashes declined from a total of 178 during the 5 preprogram years to 120 during the program years. Saving Lives cities experienced a 25% fatal crash reduction during program years relative to the rest of Massachusetts.
- During the same period in program cities fatal crashes that involved alcohol declined from a total of 69 in the 5 pre-program years to 36 during the 5 program years, a 42% greater decline relative to the rest of Massachusetts.
- The number of fatal crashes that involved speeding drivers dropped from 68 to 33 in program cities, and the number of pedestrian fatalities declined from 45 to 33.
- During the 5 program years relative to the previous 4 years, the rate of visible injuries declined from 21.1 to 16.6 per 100 crashes, a 5% greater decline than in the rest of Massachusetts. Pedestrian injuries per 100 crashes dropped from 2.0 to 1.5, a 10% decline relative to the rest of the state.
- Safety belt use increased in program cities, from 22% in 1989 to 29% in subsequent years, a rate 17% proportionately greater than that of the rest of the state.
- The proportion of motorists observed speeding was cut in half in program cities, a significantly greater decline than in comparison cities.

## **Contact Information**

For indepth information on this program, please use the contact listed below.

### **Program Developer**

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